



ILLINOISVICTIMS.ORG

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**National Organization of
PARENTS OF MURDERED CHILDREN**

VICTIMS' RIGHTS GROUPS CALL FOR ANSWERS FROM GOVERNOR QUINN ON SECRET EARLY PRISONER RELEASE

CHICAGO – Frustrated that Governor Pat Quinn and his administration continue to offer conflicting, incomplete, and contradictory explanations about the aftermath of the secret, early prisoner release program known as “MGT PUSH,” a coalition of Victims’ Rights advocates today called on the Governor to immediately answer important remaining questions, provide more information about the program and the 1,718 criminals involved, and demanded an immediate independent investigation.

“I am beside myself at this show of insensitivity,” Maria Ramirez of Parents of Murdered Children, Inc. said. “Those of us who have been victims of crime or who work on their behalf know that the fear and pain don’t go away the day the people who attacked us are convicted and sentenced. It is a process that takes time, and to know that some very violent criminals are being let out of jail after serving a fraction of their time, compounds the pain. This is outrageous.”

The coalition of victims groups also includes CAWC, Connections for Abused Women and their Children. Executive Director Cory Ryan supported concerned victims who came forward today after some details were recently released by a political campaign that listed the convictions and prior convictions of the 1,718 criminals that were released early under the Governor’s secret release program. The list of prisoner names is now posted at www.IllinoisVictims.org. The victims and law enforcement groups are joining the call of many others in the state for an independent investigation of the scandal.

“It has been traumatizing to victims and to the public that violent offenders were released this early after such serious crimes. And many have already re-offended, some violently. With no victim notification, which is required in the Illinois Constitution, many victims have been in genuine danger from these releases,” said Jennifer Bishop-Jenkins of Illinois Victims.org.

Victims groups point out that the state should have, at the very least, made full disclosure of all names of offenders released early and their records. The Governor had previously promised early releases to save money of only non-violent offenders. The MGT PUSH program released some seriously violent offenders sentenced to years in prison after only a few days in the Illinois Department of Corrections.

Important questions remain about the MGT PUSH program, such as how much the effort to clean up this “big mistake” has cost the taxpayers. How many have been taken back into custody for new charges? How are parole procedures going to change from here on? How will victim information procedures change? How will public safety be better protected in the decision making in the future? Why doesn't the State of Illinois integrate victims of crime into the decision making functions in the Prisoner Review Board and the Department of Corrections?

Terry Mayborne, President of IllinoisVictims.Org and widow of a Rockford area Sheriff's detective murdered in the line of duty, stated, “We join the other state leaders and organizations who have already called for an immediate and independent investigation to get to the bottom of this.”

Law enforcement officials who continue working to keep our streets safe have been placed in jeopardy due to the secret early release program. Officers have had to risk their lives, in some cases, to re-apprehend some of these violent offenders, many of whom are already recidivist. The victims' organizations publicly expressed their support and gratitude for the work of the state's law enforcement in the wake of this difficult issue.

“The Illinois FOP stands to support the victims and their respective advocacy organizations to bring attention to the need to address the early release of convicted criminals back into our streets. Victims and the public deserve better,” said Ted Street, President of the Illinois Fraternal Order of Police.

Other law enforcement officials who joined in the call for more answers include States Attorneys such as DuPage County State's Attorney Joe Birkett, who was not available to attend today's press conference but who sent his full support to the event.

The coalition also expressed skepticism about the Governor's claim that the early released criminals would only have served, on average, 37 more days in prison. “That is a bit misleading,” said Dora Larson of IllinoisVictims.Org whose daughter was raped and murdered in Illinois 30 years ago by a parolee. “It appears that these criminals were sentenced, on average, to 17 months in prison and, on average, served less than 30 days in state custody. Regardless, even one day less than the amount of time required is revolting to victims.”

IllinoisVictims.org is a website-based advocacy organization that empowers the voices of victims of violent crime in Illinois. They are the only statewide grassroots victims' rights organization in Illinois and provide vital information, networking, and resources. Parents of Murdered Children (POMC) provide the on-going emotional support needed to help parents and other survivors facilitate the reconstruction of a "new life" and to promote a healthy resolution.

Not only does POMC help survivors deal with their acute grief but also helps with the criminal justice system. The Illinois Fraternal Order of Police represents a community of over 35,000 active duty and retired police officers. Their mission is to increase the efficiency of the law enforcement profession and thus more firmly establish the confidence of the public in the service dedicated to the protection of life and property.

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